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THE FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

THE FAMILY

In discussing the nature of the Kazak uru it was noted that genealogically speaking Kazak society consisted of a series of blood related groups divided and subdivided into units of more and more closely related individuals. These units were all called uru. It becomes of interest to consider how small a group, for genealogical purposes, may be considered to form an uru. My informants were unable to decide for some time whether, for example, a man and his immediate family could be described as an uru. Such a usage of the term, it developed, would certainly not be common although in theory it might be permissable. It would require all the descendants of a man for several generations, said Tlenshiev—just how many he did not know, perhaps five or six—to form an uru, which would comprise a hundred houses or more. The basic uru would consist of the blood members of the group customarily occupying common winter quarters which broke up for the summer migrations into a series of family groups.

The individual family was known as yj, meaning literally "house." The members of the family, the inhabitants of the "house," would normally be a man, his wife or perhaps wives, and minor children. As his sons came of age and married they would be provided with kibitkas adjacent to their father's;[1] then the father's kibitka became known as the ylken yj, (senior or great house) and the son's kibitka as otav (junior or small house). Originally, according to Kuftin,[2] otav meant "without fire."[3] Thus there might be four or five otav around the senior kibitka. The youngest son would continue to live in the senior house which he inherited at the death of his father.

Such was the normal, or more accurately, idealized arrangement. Actually many families were not able to afford such extensive premises and several sons with their wives might continue to occupy the father's house. If three generations lived in one kibitka the grandfather and his wife slept on the left, son and son's wife on the right with grandchildren, guests and all others in the middle. If a son and his wife were living in the kibitka, especially a newly married son, his section might be separated by a curtain, not apparently for the observance of any avoidance custom but merely for the sake of privacy.[4] The left hand side of the kibitka as one entered was considered the most honorable and was reserved for the master of the house. As far as I could learn this principle was not extended to the winter dwelling; there the head of the household took what he considered the warmest and most comfortable place, the others making out as best they could.

[1] Zaleskie, *La Vie des steppes*, 18–19.

[2] *Kirgiz-Kazaki*, 34.

[3] In connection with the family fire compare the quotation from Pondoeev on pages 77–78.

[4] See also Karutz, *Unter Kirgisen und Turkmenen*, 70.

415 are kept in cases and in chests of various sizes and various outside trimmings. Clothing and all soft things are wrapped up in more or less new and costly rugs, and napless rugs, and even in ordinary ones, and carefully looped on to packages conveniently transportable on
353 camels. With these packages, as well as chests,
• 513 cases, and with sometimes also cupboards, the yurt is barricaded up to the top on the side opposite the door. Wooden folding beds are placed on the right and left sides, which are very low and short, but with unusually slanting backs which fold back. With this kind of arrangement the bed does not take up much space in the yurt with its legs, which are held in an oblique position by a special kind of wedges, and much can be laid and stood up under the back. At the same time the upper part of these legs form a back /401/ at the head and foot of the bed which is at an extremely obtuse angle with the plane of the bed, so that when the bed is covered with many felts, taking the place of a mattress here, the Kazakh can lie down on it at full length. The felts are covered also with many quilted blankets, covered with calico, of various sizes and values, and with several pillows, also padded with calico. Others also have another arrangement for a bed, something like ours, sometimes iron folding beds, and also feather comforters and pillows with clean white pillowcases, but all this, especially the last, is extremely rare. Many do not even have the simplest type of bed. They spread out felt bedding in such cases in the same places where others have the beds. The Kazakh
854 crib is similar to our children's cribs. They not only do not rock but also do not have

251 between the beds and the door. If there is one bed, then the provisions are stored in the side opposite it, in which case the place where they are stored is walled off by a chiy matting to protect it from the dogs, but in spite of this they sometimes get behind the matting at night. Thus all the walls of the tent are shown to be piled up with the miserable household articles of the Kazakhs, but all the space around the
513 hearth is free. During the day the whole family gathers just in this spot, while at night the small children, little girls, workmen and
403/ guests spending the night make their
264 beds here. The space between the campfire and the pile of packages is the place where they dine, sitting in a circle around the dish which is placed before the head of the house. He has the place of honor, that is, just opposite the door, and right among the packages. He gives up this place only to a distinguished guest, an elder, a biy who is passing by for for dinner, etc. In this case the head of the house sits
513 beside these persons, on their right. If it happens that the honored guest is to spend the night, they put him in the place where they ate. If not, the girls sleep there, the boys spread out on the right and left of the fire, and the workmen by the door.

342 The cost of a good new yurt is from 30
[136] to 150 rubles, sometimes more. A small yurt is called 'dzhulameika' in Kazakh pronunciation, and 'yulameika' in Sart and Russian. The dzhulameika costs no more than 30 rubles. In addition the Kazakhs still use the kosh, the most simplified primitive kind of yurt. This is simply a felt which is placed over straight poles stuck into the ground and tied together